

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 CA-01 IO-13 PC-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05 MMO-01 MCT-01

EB-08 OMB-01 SCS-06 /113 W

-----102970 150847Z /10

R 130915Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 176

INFO AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGUI 1061

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, CT, US

SUBJ: FAREWELL CALL ON EMPEROR BOKASSA

SUMMARY: A MEETING WITH THE EMPEROR TO PRESENT PRESIDENT CARTER'S LETTER ON THE PANAMA CANAL TURNED INTO A FAREWELL CALL. WE REVIEWED BILATERAL RELATIONS. BOKASSA AGREED TO SIGN THREE ANTI-HIJACKING CONVENTIONS AND TO MOVE FORWARD ON THE STALLED CONSULAR CONVENTION. FINALLY, I WAS USHERED INTO DIPLOMATIC LIMBO WITH AN EFFUSIVE IMPERIAL ACCOLATE. END SUMMARY.

1. I CALLED ON THE EMPEROR MAY 12 TO GIVE HIM PRESIDENT CARTER'S LETTER OF APPRECIATION FOR BOKASSA'S SUPPORT ON THE PANAMA CANAL TREATIES. BOKASSA READ THE LETTER ALOUD TO PRIME MINISTER MAIDOU AND FORMER PRESIDENT DACKO, WHO ALSO SAT IN. BOKASSA SEEMED PLEASED AT THE MESSAGE AND AT HAVING HIS GESTURE OF SUPPORT RECOGNIZED IN THIS WAY.

2. I THEN INFORMED BOKASSA THAT I WOULD BE LEAVING IN FOUR WEEKS TIME TO TAKE CHARGE OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S ANTI-TERRORIST PROGRAM. I SAID I WOULD BE LEAVING BANGUI WITH REGRET, BUT WAS
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RESPONDING TO THE SECRETARY'S REQUEST. BOKASSA GRACIOUSLY MADE SUITABLE NOISES OF APPRECIATION FOR MY WORK IN BANGUI AND CONGRATULATED ME ON MY NEW ASSIGNMENT. HE ASKED THE PRIME MINISTER TO ORGANIZE AN OFFICIAL RECEPTION IN MY HONOR AND TO DECORATE ME WITH THE COLLAR OF A COMMANDER, CENTRAL AFRICAN ORDER OF MERIT (F). HE ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT ON THE DAY OF THE RECEPTION THE PRIME MINISTER, GOVERNMENT AND DIPLOMATIC CORPS SHOULD

INAUGURATE THE BOBANGUI DISPENSARY, A LONG-STANDING AND CONTROVERSIAL SELF-HELP PROJECT NEAR THE IMPERIAL ESTATE AT BERENGO.

3. REFERRING TO MY NEW RESPONSIBILITIES, I SAID I WOULD BE GRATEFUL PERSONALLY, AS WOULD THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, IF THE GOCAE WERE TO SIGN THE THREE ANTI-HIJACKING CONVENTIONS (STATE 90969 AND BANGUI 0920). I NOTED THAT HE HAD SPOKEN OUT AGAINST TERRORISM AND HIJACKING IN THE PAST, AND I ASSUMED THAT THESE CONVENTIONS, SOME OF WHICH WERE QUITE OLD, HAD INADVERTENTLY NOT BEEN SIGNED. BOKASSA AGREED AND INSTRUCTED THE PRIME MINISTER TO FOLLOW UP WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND EITHER TO SIGN THE CONVENTIONS HIMSELF OR HAVE THE FOREIGN MINISTER DO SO. (COMMENT: I SUSPECT THAT THE GOCAE MAY NOT KNOW HOW TO GO ABOUT SIGNING THESE CONVENTIONS AND I THINK IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO PROVIDE SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON WHERE AND HOW IT COULD DO SO MOST EASILY, AS WELL AS FRENCH TEXTS OF THE CONVENTIONS.)

4. ANOTHER PIECE OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS TO WHICH I REFERRED WAS OUR PROPOSAL FOR A CONSULAR CONVENTION. I TOLD BOKASSA THAT A DRAFT TEXT HAD BEEN HANDED OVER ALMOST SIX MONTHS AGO. WE AWAITED A GOCAE RESPONSE. WE WOULD CONSIDER ANY MODIFICATION WHICH IT WISHED TO SUGGEST BUT WE DID WANT TO MOVE FORWARD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. BOKASSA SAID THAT THE ONLY ISSUE WHICH CONCERNED THE GOCAE WAS THE POSSIBILITY OF OPENING A CONSULATE IN THE U.S. THIS WAS A CONTINGENCY WHICH HE WANTED REFLECTED IN THE TREATY. ONCE AGAIN HE TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER TO FOLLOW UP AND GET AN

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ANSWER BACK TO US PROMPTLY.

5. FINALLY, I REVIEWED WITH THE EMPEROR THE CURRENT STATE OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. I NOTED THAT I HOPED TO SIGN THE TWO FINAL TRANCHES ON THE HEALTH AND SEED MULTIPLICATION AID PROJECTS, THAT PEACE CORPS STRENGTH WOULD BE RISING TOWARD A TOTAL OF 80 THIS SUMMER, AND THAT PRELIMINARY THOUGHT WAS BEING GIVEN TO WHAT WE MIGHT DO ON THE AID FRONT IN FY-80. I CAUTIONED HIM, HOWEVER, THAT THIS WOULD DEPEND ON THE POLITICAL CLIMATE IN WASHINGTON AND ON A CONTINUED POSITIVE EVOLUTION IN OUR RELATIONSHIP. OBVIOUSLY NO COMMITMENT SHOULD BE ASSUMED ON OUR PART. OVERALL, HOWEVER, I SAID I WOULD LEAVE BANGUI WITH A SENSE OF OPTIMISM. DESPITE PAST PROBLEMS WE HAD DEVELOPED AND ABILITY TO TALK TO EACH OTHER FRANKLY AND OPENLY. I HOPED THIS WOULD CONTINUE. BOKASSA SAID HE SHARED THIS OPTIMISM AND WOULD WORK IN THAT SPIRIT.

6. BOKASSA THEN TOLD ME THAT HE WOULD STILL LIKE TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES. HE SHOWED ME PRESIDENT FORD'S LETTER OF NOVEMBER 20, 1975 INDICATING A WILLINGNESS TO MEET BOKASSA AT THE WHITE HOUSE. THE EMPEROR SAID HE WAS THINKING OF VISITING WHEN THE WEATHER WAS WARM EITHER THIS YEAR OR NEXT. HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, PLAN TO ATTEND ANY OF THE UN SESSIONS THIS YEAR ALTHOUGH HE

MIGHT WANT TO COMBINE A 1979 TRIP WITH A STOP IN NEW YORK. I RESPONDED THAT I WOULD, OF COURSE, INFORM WASHINGTON OF HIS INTEREST. IT WAS MOST UNLIKELY THAT ANYTHING COULD BE ARRANGED THIS YEAR. AMBASSADORS HAD RECENTLY BEEN ASKED TO DISCOURAGE HIGH LEVEL VISITORS TO THE US FROM EXPECTING CALLS ON THE PRESIDENT THIS YEAR. NEXT YEAR WAS, OF COURSE, A DIFFERENT MATTER. I DID NOT EXPECT TO HAVE ANY COMMENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT BEFORE MY DEPARTURE AND THIS WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE A SUBJECT FOR MY SUCCESSOR TO PURSUE. I COMMENTED PARENTHETICALLY THAT I UNDERSTOOD AN ACTIVE SEARCH WAS ON FOR A SUCCESSOR AND THAT I DID NOT HAVE THE IMPRESSION THERE WOULD BE AN UNUSUALLY LONG GAP BETWEEN MY DEPARTURE AND HIS ARRIVAL.

7. THE MEETING ENDED WITH BOKASSA ONCE AGAIN CONGRATULATING ME
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ON MY APPOINTMENT. HE SAID HE WISHED TO EMBRACE ME AND FOR THE FIRST AND LAST TIME I RECEIVED THE IMPERIAL BEAR HUG. WITH SMILES AND BEST WISHES I WAS USHERED FROM THE IMPERIAL PRESENCE.

8. COMMENT: BOKASSA SEEMED TIRED FROM HIS TRAVELS ALTHOUGH CHIPPER AND IN GOOD SPIRITS. HE SKIRTED CONTENTIOUS ISSUES. HE

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R 130915Z MAY 78
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGUI 1061

APPEARED SATISFIED WITH THE NEW EQUILIBRIUM WHICH OUR RELATIONS
HAVE ACHIEVED AND HE DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT HE CAN GET FROM US. HIS FEELERS ABOUT A VISIT REFLECT A LONG STANDING DREAM, GOING BACK TO THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION, OF BEING RECEIVED OFFICIALLY AT THE WHITE HOUSE. HE IS NOT PUSHING ON THIS ISSUE BUT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY USE IT LATER IN THE YEAR AND NEXT YEAR AS AN INDICATION OF HOW THE WIND IS BLOWING IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS.

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